

Remarks by California Gov. Schwarzenegger to the National Republican Convention

Tuesday, August 31, 2004

Text of California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's speech at the Republican National Convention:

SCHWARZENEGGER: Thank you very much. Thank you. What a greeting. What a greeting. Wow. This is like winning an Oscar -- as if I would know.

(LAUGHTER)

Speaking of acting, one of my movies was called "True Lies." And that's what the Democrats should have called their convention.

(APPLAUSE)

You know, on the way up here to the podium, a gentleman came up to me and said, "Governor, you are as good a politician as you were an actor." What a cheap shot.

(LAUGHTER)

Cannot believe it.

Anyway, my fellow Americans, this is an amazing moment for me. To think that a once-scrawny boy from Austria could grow up to become governor of the state of California and then stand here...

(APPLAUSE)

... then stand here in Madison Square Garden and speak on behalf of the president of the United States -- that is an immigrant's dream.

(APPLAUSE)

SCHWARZENEGGER: It is the American dream.

You know, I was born in Europe and I've traveled all over the world. And I can tell you that there is no place, no country, more compassionate, more generous, more accepting and more welcoming than the United States of America.

(APPLAUSE)

As long as I live, I will never forget that day 21 years ago when I raised my right hand and took the oath of citizenship. Do you know how proud I was? I was so proud that I walked around with an American flag around my shoulders all day long.

(APPLAUSE)

Tonight, I want to talk to you about why I'm even more proud to be an American -- why I'm proud to be a Republican -- and why I believe this country is in good hands.

(APPLAUSE)

When I was a boy, the Soviets occupied part of Austria.

SCHWARZENEGGER: I saw their tanks in the streets. I saw Communism with my own eyes. I remember the fear we had when we had to cross into the Soviet sector.

Growing up, we were told, "Don't look the soldiers in the eye. Just look straight ahead." It was a common belief that Soviet soldiers could take a man out of his own car and ship him back to the Soviet Union as slave labor.

Now, my family didn't have a car. But one day we were in my uncle's car. It was near dark as we came to the Soviet checkpoint. I was a little boy. I was not an action hero back then.

(LAUGHTER)

But I remember. I remember how scared I was that the soldiers would pull my father or my uncle out of the car and I would never see them again. My family and so many others lived in fear of the Soviet boot. Today, the world no longer fears the Soviet Union, and it is because of the United States of America.

(APPLAUSE)

SCHWARZENEGGER: As a kid I saw the socialist country that Austria became after the Soviets left. Now, don't misunderstand me, I love Austria, and I love the Austrian people.

But I always knew America was the place for me. In school, when the teacher would talk about America, I would daydream about coming here. I would daydream about living here. I would sit there and watch for hours American movies transfixed by my heroes like John Wayne.

(APPLAUSE)

Everything about America seemed so big to me, so open, so possible.

I finally arrived here in 1968. What a special day it was. I remember I arrived here with empty pockets but full of dreams, full of determination, full of desire.

The presidential campaign was in full swing. I remember watching the Nixon-Humphrey presidential race on TV. A friend of mine who spoke German and English translated for me. I heard Humphrey saying things that sounded like socialism, which I had just left.

SCHWARZENEGGER: But then I heard Nixon speak. Then I heard Nixon speak. He was talking about free enterprise, getting the government off your back, lowering the taxes and strengthening the military.

(APPLAUSE)

Listening to Nixon speak sounded more like a breath of fresh air.

I said to my friend, I said, "What party is he?"

My friend said, "He's a Republican."

I said, "Then I am a Republican."

(APPLAUSE)

And I have been a Republican ever since. And trust me -- and trust me -- in my wife's family, that's no small achievement.

(APPLAUSE)

But I am proud to be with the party of Abraham Lincoln, the party of Teddy Roosevelt, the party of Ronald Reagan, and the party of George W. Bush.

(APPLAUSE)

To my fellow immigrants listening tonight, I want you to know how welcome you are in this party. We Republicans admire your ambition. We encourage your dreams. We believe in your future.

(APPLAUSE)

SCHWARZENEGGER: And one thing I learned about America is that if you work hard and if you play by the rules, this country is truly open to you. You can achieve anything.

(APPLAUSE)

Everything I have, my career, my success, my family, I owe to America.

(APPLAUSE)

In this country, it doesn't make any difference where you were born. It doesn't make any difference who your parents were. It doesn't make any difference if you're like me and couldn't even speak English until you were in your 20s. America gave me opportunities, and my immigrant dreams came true.

I want other people to get the same chances I did, the same opportunities. And I believe they can. That's why I believe in this country, that's why I believe in this party, and that's why I believe in this president.

(APPLAUSE)

SCHWARZENEGGER: Now, many of you out there tonight are Republican like me in your hearts and in your beliefs. Maybe you're from Guatemala. Maybe you're from the Philippines. Maybe you're from Europe or the Ivory Coast. Maybe you live in Ohio, Pennsylvania or New Mexico.

(APPLAUSE)

And maybe -- just maybe -- you don't agree with this party on every single issue. I say to you tonight that I believe that's not only OK, but that's what's great about this country.

(APPLAUSE)

Here we can respectfully disagree and still be patriotic, still be American and still be good Republicans.

(APPLAUSE)

SCHWARZENEGGER: My fellow immigrants, my fellow Americans, how do you know if you are a Republican? Well, I tell you how. If you believe that government should be accountable to the people, not the people to the government, then you are a Republican.

(APPLAUSE)

If you believe a person should be treated as an individual, not as a member of an interest group, then you are a Republican.

(APPLAUSE)

If you believe your family knows how to spend your money better than the government does, then you are a Republican.

(APPLAUSE)

If you believe our educational system should be held accountable for the progress of our children, then you are a Republican.

(APPLAUSE)

If you believe this country, not the United Nations, is the best hope for democracy, then you are a Republican.

(APPLAUSE)

SCHWARZENEGGER: And, ladies and gentlemen, if you believe that we must be fierce and relentless and terminate terrorism, then you are a Republican.

(APPLAUSE)

Now, there's another way you can tell you're a Republican. You have faith in free enterprise, faith in the resourcefulness of the American people and faith in the U.S. economy. And to those critics who are so pessimistic about our economy, I say: Don't be economic girlie-men.

(APPLAUSE)

SCHWARZENEGGER: The U.S. economy remains the envy of the world. We have the highest economic growth of any of the world's major industrialized nations. Don't you remember the pessimism of 20 years ago, when the critics said Japan and Germany are overtaking the U.S.? Ridiculous.

Now, they say that India and China are overtaking us. Don't you believe it. We may hit a few bumps, but America always moves ahead. That's what Americans do.

(APPLAUSE)

We move prosperity ahead.

(APPLAUSE)

We move prosperity ahead. We move freedom ahead. And we move people ahead.

And under President Bush and Vice President Cheney, America's economy is moving ahead in spite of a recession they inherited and in spite of the attack on our homeland.

(APPLAUSE)

SCHWARZENEGGER: Now, the other party says that we have two Americas. Don't you believe that either. I have visited our troops in Iraq, Kuwait, Bosnia, Germany, and all over the world. I've visited our troops in California, where they train before they go overseas. I have visited our military hospitals. And I tell you this, that our men and women in uniform do not believe there are two Americas. They believe we are one America, and they are fighting for it.

(APPLAUSE)

We are one America, and President Bush is defending it with all his heart and soul.

(APPLAUSE)

SCHWARZENEGGER: That's what I admire most about the president. He's a man of perseverance. He's a man of inner strength. He is a leader who doesn't flinch, who doesn't waiver, and does not back down.

(APPLAUSE)

My fellow Americans, make no mistake about it: Terrorism is more insidious than Communism, because it yearns to destroy not just the individual, but the entire international order.

The president did not go into Iraq because the polls told him it was popular. As a matter of fact, the polls said just the opposite. But leadership isn't about polls.

(APPLAUSE)

It's about making decisions you think are right and then standing behind those decisions.

(APPLAUSE)

SCHWARZENEGGER: That's why America is safer with George W. Bush as president.

(APPLAUSE)

He knows you don't reason with terrorists. You defeat them. He knows you can't reason with people blinded by hate. You see, they hate the power of the individual. They hate the progress of women. They hate the religious freedom of others. And they hate the liberating breeze of democracy.

But, ladies and gentlemen, their hate is no match for America's decency.

(APPLAUSE)

We are the America that sends out the Peace Corps volunteers to teach our village children. We are the America that sends out the missionaries and doctors to raise up the poor and the sick.

SCHWARZENEGGER: We are the America that gives more than any other country to fight AIDS in Africa and the developing world.

(APPLAUSE)

And we are the America that fights not for imperialism, but for human rights and democracy.

(APPLAUSE)

You know, when the Germans brought down the Berlin Wall, America's determination helped wield the sledgehammers. And when that lone, young Chinese man stood in front of those tanks in Tiananmen Square, America stood with him. And when Nelson Mandela smiled in election victory after all those years in prison, America celebrated, too.

We are still the lamp lighting the world, especially those who struggle. No matter in what labor camp they slave, no matter in what injustice they're trapped, they hear our call. They see our light. And they feel the pull of our freedom.

(APPLAUSE)

SCHWARZENEGGER: They come here, as I did, because they believe -- they believe in us. They come because their hearts say to them, as mine did, "If only I can get to America." You know, someone once wrote, "There are those who say that freedom is nothing but a dream." They are right. It's the American dream.

(APPLAUSE)

No matter the nationality, no matter the religion, no matter the ethnic background, America brings out the best in people.

(APPLAUSE)

And as governor -- as governor of the great state of California, I see the best in Americans every day.

(APPLAUSE)

I see the best in Americans every day, our police, our firefighters, our nurses, doctors and teachers, our parents.

And what about the extraordinary men and women who have volunteered to fight for the United States of America?

(APPLAUSE)

SCHWARZENEGGER: I have such great respect for them and their heroic families.

Let me tell you about the sacrifice and the commitment that I have seen first-hand. In one of the military hospitals I visited, I met a young guy who was in bad shape. He'd lost a leg, he had a hole through his stomach, and his shoulder had been shot through. And the list goes on and on and on.

I could tell that there was no way he could ever return to combat. But when I asked him, "When do you think you'll get out of the hospital?" He said, "Sir, in three weeks."

And do you know what he said to me then? He said he was going to get a new leg, and then he was going to get some therapy, and then he was going to go back to Iraq and fight alongside his buddies.

(APPLAUSE)

And you know what he said to me then? You know what he said to me then?

SCHWARZENEGGER: He said, "Arnold, I'll be back."

(APPLAUSE)

Well, ladies and gentlemen, America is back -- back from the attack on our homeland, back from the attack on our economy, and back from the attack on our way of life. We're back because of the perseverance, character and leadership of the 43rd president of the United States, George W. Bush.

(APPLAUSE)

My fellow Americans, I want you to know that I believe with all my heart that America remains the great idea that inspires the world. It's a privilege to be born here. It's an honor to become a citizen here. It's a gift to raise your family here, to vote here, and to live here.

SCHWARZENEGGER: Our president, George W. Bush, has worked hard to protect and preserve the American dream for all of us. And that's why I say, send him back to Washington for four more years.

SCHWARZENEGGER WITH AUDIENCE: Four more years. Four more years. Four more years. Four more years. Four more years. Four more years.

SCHWARZENEGGER: Thank you, America. Thank you, and God bless you all.

Thank you.